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## THE EXPLORATION OF MOUNDS IN NORTH CAROLINA

By CHARLES PEABODY

IN May, 1910, in company with my little daughter Margaret, eleven years old, I made a short stay at Fayetteville, North Carolina, for the purpose of examining two small groups of mounds in the neighborhood.

The first group is situated about twelve miles from the town toward the southwest and about five miles southwest of Hope Mills in Cumberland county on the main line of the Atlantic Coast Line and also on the Aberdeen and Rockfish Railroad. The second group is on the Duncan Shaw estate, about eight miles nearly due west of Fayetteville. Fayetteville is situated at the head of navigation on the Cape Fear river; in former times it was the terminus of a plank road leading to the western part of the state; this connection is still maintained by a direct line of railroad, and goods can be here transshipped directly to the sea by daily steamers on the Cape Fear.

The country is gently undulating, well watered, and, as a whole, fertile; much of it is in the "sand-hill" district, and much was formerly covered with the magnificent long leaved pine (*Pinus australis*, *Pinus palustris*) from which turpentine is derived. The great yellow masses of resin adhering to the trees are a characteristic feature of the somewhat sparse remains of the former forests. The sandy character of the land in the lower levels following the track of the Atlantic Coast Line makes the average of the remoter roads slow and deep; the twelve miles to and fro each day from Fayetteville, while picturesque, were tedious. In the scrub timber a few consecutive wagon trips suffice to make a passable road and the multiplicity of these is confusing; it is worthy of note that at one point in the woods near Fayetteville on the way to Hope Mills nine or more roads converge in a star-shaped figure.

I am anxious at this time to express my appreciation of the courtesy of all with whom we came in contact in Fayetteville; a

hospitality to my little daughter and myself characteristic of the south was none the less to be enjoyed, and there were added to this a readiness and an ability to help the work along, to furnish labor, and a very just idea of the objects and of the results of our efforts. To Dr J. W. McNeil I am especially indebted for shelter, guidance, and advice, besides the fact that it was through him that I was informed of the existence of the mounds themselves. He informed my uncle, the Hon. J. C. Buxton of Winston-Salem, regarding the latter who in turn told us and showed sufficient interest to visit us in the field.

The present population of this part of Cumberland county is very largely of Scotch descent. Formerly the proportion was an exceedingly large one and the average of stature easily observed on the streets substantiates this, even if the great number of Scottish names did not suggest it at once. It has a certain anthropological interest in that the name of Seventy-first, a township to the west of Fayetteville is accounted for by the tradition that during the times of the old muster-roll call there were seventy-one names there of men six feet or more tall.

Ethnologically considered, the region was subject to a number of influences.<sup>1</sup> The Siouan Woccon had a position on the Neuse river, and the Siouan Catawba were not far away, in the present South Carolina; the Iroquoian Cherokee extended from near this region westward, and the Algonquians also reached nearly to this point. Intertribal trade and feuds must have caused longer and shorter encampments and the known settlement of one tribe here would by no means make it necessary to attribute the present remains to that tribe. In connection with Indians the following reference by Mr C. J. Koon<sup>2</sup> is interesting; in speaking of Stanley and Montgomery counties further west he says that fifty years before (1824) bands of Indians used to go to Fayetteville armed with bows and arrows, willing to show off their skill in archery.

Not much work of a technical scientific nature has been done in archeology; a number of antiquities from Lenoir county have been

<sup>1</sup> Cf. J. W. Powell, *Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, 1885-1886, pp. 47, 78, and 114.

<sup>2</sup> C. J. Koon, *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution*, for 1874, pp. 389, f.

variously reported and, in particular, reference may be made to the interesting mound described in the same county by J. M. Spainhour.<sup>1</sup> In a small mound only three by two meters in extent there were three burials in which the right hand of the skeleton rested on a stone, an intentional posture the like of which was not

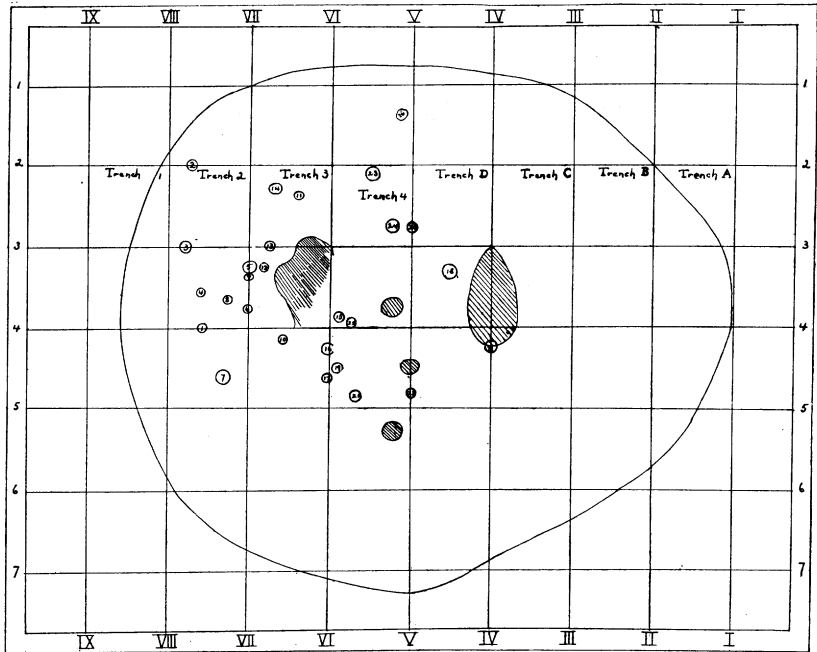


FIG. 41.—Map of Mound I. Portions previously disturbed are shaded, while the numbered circles represent burials: the distance between the coordinates is two meters.

found during our excavations; a further exploration of the district is highly desirable, both for the purpose of elucidating modes of sepulture and to collate the material that may be found in this focus of Indian life.

Numerous reports were brought in from time to time of mounds and antiquities somewhat widely scattered; a camping expedition of a month or so would be well repaid, and, failing larger explorations, if those who dig in the mounds on their own or others' prop-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution* for 1871, pp. 404, ff.

erty, would take careful note of what they find and communicate the results either to the writer at the Peabody Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts, or to the Smithsonian Institution at Washington a beginning at least could be made towards a satisfactory archeological description of the region.

The only mound of any size of any considerable importance opened by ourselves was in the group beyond Hope Mills (fig. 41). A somewhat detailed description of its excavation follows; the remainder of the mounds can be treated much more cursorily. The mound under consideration, known as mound I (figs. 42 and 43), was 15.2 meters long and 13.1 meters wide, the longer axis running from west to east thirty-five degrees south; the highest point was .762 meters above the level of the surrounding soil. Considerable digging had already been done in the mound, as may be seen by reference to the map; the previously excavated portions are shown by shading.

In accordance with the better custom where feasible, practically the entire mound was cut through in sections; it was staked out at intervals of two meters, the north and south coordinates being numbered in Roman numerals, the east and west in Arabic. The extent excavated was comprised between stakes I and IX and stakes 2 and 6. In many cases the trenches were carried quite deeper than the surrounding level, as not unfrequently the ground had been disturbed to greater depths. Thus eight trenches were distinguished, the four to the east being lettered *A, B, C, D*, and those towards the west numbered 1, 2, 3, 4 (fig. 44). The soil of the mound being exceedingly easy digging, the work executed by a crew of from four to six men was carried on from both ends at once. It may be remarked in passing that, in most mound exploration in the United States, working through a mound from the western end, sometimes a great temptation when it is known that that section is particularly rich, is attended with the disadvantage that the predominant west winds of our latitudes tend to blow the dust from the excavation over the workmen; as a whole working from the east is more advantageous. As the work proceeded a description of the cross-sections of the mound was taken every two meters for the identification of the strata and signs of construction. At no time was it necessary to create a breast more than 1.15 meters

in height (at stake VI). Nothing especially striking occurred in the sections. Quantities of charcoal and discolored soil were scattered through and there were innumerable roots and twigs, in some cases extending far below the level of the surrounding field. The presence of these roots is of importance in only two regards: (1) they have been a pernicious agent in the destruction of bones



FIG. 42.—Mound I from the south.

find (2) the constant presence of the roots prevents the determination of how much of the charcoal and of other effects of are (notably the charring of the human bones) is due to man's agency and how much to the forest fire which at no remote period burned the mound over; fire will run a considerable distance underground. In my opinion much of the fine charcoal and of the discoloration of the ground are due to this cause, but the charring of the bones seems in large measure to be owing to something else. A "sod-line" was occasionally observed, notably at stake IV.

The mound contained great quantities of human bones, some of them calcined. They were in bad condition, friable and broken, so much so that not one skull sufficiently intact for measuring

could be brought home. The experiment tried with an excellent skull discovered by my daughter of leaving it out over night to harden failed by reason of some predatory animals. Separate burials to the number of twenty-six were distinguished and noted in position on the map, but it is highly doubtful whether they are, the most of them, intentional separate burials at all. Where any order of interment was discernible the bundle type seemed to be adopted with but little regard to orientation, or to the position, or to the placing or direction of the skull. The shallowest burials were nos. 5, 7, 19,



FIG. 43.—Mound I from the east.

and 21, 25 centimeters down, and the deepest, no. 3, 91 centimeters down. Nos. 7 and 18 seemed to be double and no. 23 contained three skulls. No. 4 contained an interesting femur which presents a fracture. Dr W. C. Farabee, of Harvard University, who very kindly looked over the skeletal remains at my request, has furnished the following description: The fracture is of the shaft of the left femur about at the junction of the upper and middle thirds; the lower end shows the rounded shaft of the bone fused in a large bone

callose; the extremity of the shaft above the fracture remains projecting forward and outside. The large bone callose is considerably damaged by weathering.

Otherwise the bones showed no somatological features of interest. But few of the burials were accompanied with specimens;



FIG. 44.—Trench I, mound I from the south.

in no. 9 a fragment of a pipe lay under the bundle of bones; in no. 13 there was a mass of bones with a stone celt under the north side; in no. 20 a biconical pipe of clay in fragments lay westward of the bones and a little higher up; and in no. 26 several hundreds of minute shell beads lay under the skull.

The fractured bone is represented in figure 5. Scattered human bones were met with elsewhere and in trench 3 (from stakes VI to VII); from stakes 2 to 5 the soil was practically a mass of human bones without any rule or order of deposition. A study of the map shows that the human remains were largely localized in the northern quadrant of the mound. The mound was not rich in specimens; a short catalogue follows. In stone there were the celt mentioned above with skeleton 13, a projectile point of white quartz



from trench B, a part of an elongated monitor pipe with skeleton 9, and a monitor pipe of the platform variety not far from skeleton 14, fragments of projectile points and chips, and some yellow ochre.

In pottery there was found an excellent biconical pipe with skeleton 20 (see above); it is decorated with a V-shaped motive design with a curious figure possibly suggesting a house (Mr C. C. Willoughby); at least it is as much of a resemblance as the famous "Signes tectiformes" of the Dordogne. Two conical fragments, probably the pointed ends of vases for insertion in the soft earth, were found and a moderate number of monotonously and rudely decorated fragments; with the exception of the pipe no complete vessel occurred.

In shell a gorget about five centimeters in diameter was found; it has the peculiarity of a perforation running parallel with the flat surfaces and of course may have served other purposes than that of decoration.

In this mound one meter west of stake V in the line of stake 3, and 60 centimeters down was a cache containing the following: one scraper of white quartz, two triangular points of a dark hard stone and eight of white quartz (of type 1 Ba)<sup>1</sup> and of excellent workmanship, three leaf-shaped white quartz specimens, thirteen fragments of white quartz, one fragment of pottery, three pieces of red ochre, one of graphite, two rough stones with little or no working, a rough but worked flat smoothing stone, and a fragment of a pipe with twigs growing through it. The length of the fractured bone is 23 centimeters.

A comparative absence of human bones was evident in the neighborhood of the cache; in fact, with the exception of the shell beads and a few other objects, any necessary connection between interment and other specimens was not to be made out.

The disposal of the bones, their localization in the northern quadrant of the mound and the massing of the remains of perhaps sixty individuals into a space of a very few cubic feet point surely to secondary burial (common enough to be sure), but also to suddenness or haste in their putting away greater than would be

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the Report of the Committee on Archeological Nomenclature in the *American Anthropologist* (N. S.), vol. 11, No. 1, Jan.-March, 1909, pp. 114, ff.

the case were there no emergency at hand; accustomed as one may be to extraordinary postures and careless deposition one is surprised at the extreme exemplification of these features here.

Mound II was a few hundred meters to the westward and was eight meters long by five broad and only 25 to 30 centimeters high. Much of the surface had been dug over already and there was not very much of interest to be obtained. A few beads of copper of the regular rolled cylindrical type, some charcoal, and numerous bones were found.

The mounds on the Duncan Shaw Place (nos. III and IV), were still smaller and being in the woods would have been almost unrecognizable had it not been for the memory of Mr Shaw and of an old negro retainer on the estate.

But little was found save fragments of bone of small diameter and many of them broken in clean fractures at right angles to their length. They carried on both surfaces in some cases a series of indentations as if made by futile attempts with a blunt implement at intentional breaking.

On comparison with bones from bodies known to have been cremated, the fractures and markings proved to be quite similar. The bones are white in color and thus, while having been subjected to great heat, are different from those that have been in direct contact with the flames and discolored by them. A distinct absence of any proportion of the larger bones is noticeable, yet that some at least of the bones are human seems highly probable. Further excavation in the region may serve to explain these results of cremation and to set forth the different methods which may have been employed.

The surface in the neighborhood of Fayetteville provides many specimens, often of much finer quality than those thus far found in the mounds. Projectile points, knives, and chips, with an occasional perforator, are found along the water courses by careful search and, although the region is not as rich as some of the classical centers of exploration, it is to be hoped that work there may be continued, work which will be sure to reward the archeologist.